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Title

Appreciating appreciation

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/76m438qt>

Journal

Sub-Stance, 42(2)

ISSN

0049-2426

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Publication Date

2013-08-26

DOI

10.1353/sub.2013.0016

Peer reviewed

Appreciating Appreciation

In 2007 I thought I could argue directly for recuperating the concept of “appreciation” as a model of responsiveness to the particularity of art works.ⁱ I acknowledged the efforts of Walter Pater to adapt this concept, but complained that his effort had been insufficiently philosophical.ⁱⁱ Because he was satisfied with exemplifying the concept rather than analyzing its elements, the concept of appreciation was soon relegated to providing a name for two critical practices. On one hand appreciation was narrowed to the domain of connoisseurship, where the primary focus for responses to works of art were capacities for extremely detailed attention that mattered primarily for matters of attribution and description. Appreciation seemed at the opposite pole from celebrating the power of the overall work or the challenge that it posed for inherited ways of thinking. On the other hand the concept became an excuse for inattentive generalization as students were forced to sit through courses that offered “art appreciation,” or “the appreciation of literary masterpieces,” or, more recently, “the appreciation of cultural differences.” “Appreciation” in the title became a euphemism for “art history light,” or “close reading without historical context,” or “pieties about cultural difference without the economics necessary to define the plight of oppressed groups.”

Now I can criticize the Altieri of 2007 for being insufficiently philosophical and insufficiently ambitious. And now I have an even thicker ironic skin that enables me to ignore my own fears that today the concept of appreciation occupies the junk heap of failed metaphors for what can structure literary education. More important, I feel I can build on Derek Attridge’s powerful critique of what he calls “instrumental” readings of literature which override their particularity in the service of bids to apply them to general social and philosophical themes.ⁱⁱⁱ He makes a compelling case that teachers of literature now have such anxieties about the relevance to their discipline that they are eager to ally literature with disciplines that promise practical consequences—whether it be affiliations with victims, the analysis of economic interests, projections about neurology, or the possibility of moral knowledge. But he also shows how such pursuits risk destroying what disciplinary integrity the teaching of literature might have because without an emphasis on the particularity imaginations can compose we have no way to argue that we possess a distinctive way of developing more subtle and supple readers of an increasingly intricate social world.

Yet I cannot share Attridge's positive alternative to instrumentalization. He casts significant literary texts as distinctive events whose singularity offers both a kind of truth and a kind of ethical demand that we honor its otherness. I doubt that singularity can bear truth value, and I cannot understand how otherness can issue any kind of demand because demand requires common ground.^{iv} So I want to try another strategy for dealing with literary texts that places the uniqueness of the made object within a broader context of related language games. I will argue that practices of appreciation can bring the particularity of literary experience into continuity with some other basic ways of negotiating the world.

My full case will require a book. That is good news for me but bad news for the reader now because I feel I have to offer the general thrust of my overall theoretical position as a backdrop for what I will say about appreciation. Obviously I will have to be so brief as to risk offering only a parody of an argument (which would not be the first time this happened in literary studies). Then I can settle down into a more careful explication of why I think appreciation is so valuable a concept.

I begin with the impossible but necessary task of challenging the authority of the concept of the humanities. The concept is both arrogant and empty. It is arrogant because it assumes that whatever is not encompassed in its ken is somehow other than human. And it is empty because, unlike the sciences, the term does not refer to specific practices that have means of verification and of determining applications for the work they sponsor. The term "humanities" has no practical correlate: it is as if the term just gives all practical use to its other, the sciences, and so can only make vague claims about developing sensibility and bringing ethical consciousness to bear on how we deal with an otherwise practical world.

This lack of connection between the concept of humanities and any particular concrete practices has important consequences. The term produces a difference that masks a total lack of capacity to mobilize that difference in significant ways. Because the humanities has become virtually a figure for the general lack of effective constraints on discursive practices, its sub-fields each after go whoring after disciplinary models that will not overtly repudiate them. In particular, the study of literature seems now torn those literary critics who seek instrumental models aligning the study of texts with other better defined disciplinary frameworks and those critics like Attridge who turn primarily to aesthetics. Each promises to allow the working out of cognitive claims for literary work—either by the work's fitting into questions from other disciplines or by allowing the domain of cognitive

to include a special kind of “truth”: I am not sure how aware Attridge is of the sad affinity between his claim for the truth of the literary event and New Critical claims for the non-discursive truth of fundamentally metaphoric statements.^v

[[As we proceed I will have a lot to say about the limitations of instrumental approaches. But our uses of aesthetics seem to me to offer more subtle problems that I have to engage immediately so that I can clarify the roles appreciation can play in literary experience. Traditionally the aesthetic was the arena in which theorists explained the possibilities of judgments that were not oriented to practical consequences but were based on characterizing responses to objects that seemed significant for the experiences they caused rather than for the use values that they promised. Kant for example spoke of “reflective judgment” contrasted to determinate judgment, and the British empiricists made aesthetic inquiry the study of taste and the implications of modes of behavior not based on possessive individualism.^{vi} This tradition comes down to us largely in the concept of aesthetic attitudes by which we distinguish experiences oriented to our imaginative life from experiences with direct stakes in the practical world.

But two basic pressures altered how aesthetic inquiry affected literary study. The first was internal. If philosophers and artists of all kinds were going to idealize states of response that subordinated practical interests to more reflexive ones, they had to demonstrate what it was in the object that warranted such differences in response. The second pressure was more vague and general, but no less powerful. As the “humanities” increasingly came in conflict with science, proponents felt the need to develop concepts like “non-discursive truth” which required them to focus on how particular art objects could provide values capable of competing with the sciences. And without any disciplinary center, the various arts had to turn to aesthetics to provide accounts that gave the particular art object the relevant power.

The history of Kant’s aesthetic theory provides a useful illustration of these shifts. Kant recognized from the start that he needed both a principle of judgment and an image of the object that could contrast aesthetic experience to the domains of understanding and of rational morality. Hence his notions of “reflective judgment” and the purposiveness without purpose created by the genius having nature give the rule to art. But while he elaborated the nature of the art object, Kant’s main focus was on the conditions of response by which the audience’s dispositions toward the world might be modified by experiencing such objects. Concentrating on response allowed him so elaborate a difference between mere liking and approving the work, a distinction that requires the subject to experience capacities for

universals contained within the act of judgment. And then he could show how aesthetic experience became symbolic of moral experience because it approached the universals that in moral judgments were determined by practical reason.

But by the late nineteenth century theorists and artists abandoned Kant's psychology of judgment. All the emphasis had to be placed on the power of the purposive object to provide distinctive pleasures and open paths for the mind not limited by the constraints of empirical understanding. So where the emphasis on judgment had been, now there was only reliance on formalist accounts of the art object as possible explanations of how art might provide alternatives to practices devoted to economic rationality. In effect the greater the pressure to specify alternatives the culture of commodities, the greater the need for concrete models on which the claims to difference might be based.

This is when the domain of aesthetics became problematic for literary studies, and this is why I will propose an alternative to talk about the humanities. When the focus of aesthetics shifts from conditions of response to properties of the object, there is an obvious tendency to emphasize those properties of the object that are physically present, since these can be demonstrated as features that have to be engaged in different ways than we normally adapt for objects of ordinary consumption. One can show how these visible features produce internal relations establishing formal effects. And one can show how the medium works to confer individual force for these elements like relations between point, line, and plane or rhythms and harmonic or anti-harmonic effects.

Such emphasis on internal relations threatens to narrow the scope of most art objects since the imagination is focused on how the object might be distinct in itself rather than on how it might earn distinction because of how it engages concerns basic to social life in general. This danger is magnified when we try to talk about all of literature within a model that at best fits some lyric poetry and experimental fiction. One simply cannot say very much about most literary works if one talks about the medium in terms of letters or sounds or even internal formal relations. Rather most texts we take as literary are primarily rhetorical objects: their elemental stuff directly engages us in worlds of meaning and the structuring of sense.^{vii} Meanings and structures have their material aspects, but we do not capture most writers' intentions if we focus only on these. And we do not see the possibility of different ways of applying what we usually treat as aesthetic attitudes if we let our objects of attention get defined primarily in aesthetic terms. Only by stressing rhetorical purpose can we imagine how textual

objects may be deployed for various expressive actions that can be defined dramatically rather than by analogies with other art media. We might even do the other arts a favor by releasing them into dramatic means of foregrounding the place the work desires within our broader interests in understanding the world and its possibilities.]]

How do we work toward such release—both from the governing concept of the humanities and from the focus on aesthetic objects that substitutes for the lack of any determinate content in the idea of the humanities? And how do we preserve respect for the distinctiveness of art objects if we emphasize their relation to other non-art practices? In order to answer my own rhetorical questions I have to offer another set of generalizations.

I propose replacing the divide between the humanities and the sciences by returning to tripartite divisions of fields that were popular before science demanded increased authority over cultural life. The tripartite also us to be more concrete because we can align each basic version of intellectual life with clear practices. Where science was I would put the domain of description. Descriptions aim at truth values because they are measured by their power to refer to observable entities and to place them in explanatory frameworks. Second, there is the domain of policy that invokes something like Aristotle's practical reason or Kant's prudence. Policy relies on descriptions, but the aim is not developing a stable relationship between phenomena and the laws that govern them. Rather the basic aim of policy discourse is to provide and to test effective rationales for the actions they propose. Policy is the art of making judgments about the welfare of various social units.

Finally there is the large domain of expressive activity. It too deals with particular rationales and shares a basic concern with the interpretation of actions. But these interpretations are likely to stress what is typical, and so shareable and so negotiable in these actions. Or we might make the same point by emphasizing how policy studies is more likely to situate the actions in patterns of needs or capacities or entitlements than to concentrate on their particularity. Expressive activity on the other hand invites a primary concern for eliciting responsiveness to the particular force that the individual act might embody. And that cannot be done effectively by description or by practical reason. Expressive activity invites attention to human subjectivity in its modes of display. Display consists in actions that strive to be recognized in their particularity rather than in their argumentative capacity to solicit a place in what seems backed by laws and regularities. Recognition of expressive particularity requires audiences willing and

capable of fleshing out the possible significance of these actions and developing appropriate responses.

At this point we arrive at the importance of appreciation—not just in art but in the entire domain of expressive activities. Appreciation becomes the primary positive means for honoring expressive power and for attuning responses adequate for this power. Consider how Wittgenstein separates the expressive domain from the domain of descriptions. He offers a simple contrast indicating the immense difference between “Red.” and “Red!” (PI p. 187). Under standard discursive conditions “Red.” binds us to examining how this could be a meaningful assertion: something addressed is or is not red, and so this statement is either true or false. But if we replace the period by an exclamation mark we drastically change the semantic environment. Now we are not dealing with a statement intended to be held up against the world and judged for its pictorial adequacy. Rather we are invited to imagine how we might flesh out this statement to explore its significance—for the agent whose expression it is and for the observer’s possible taking direction from the expression to see how he or she might find cause for exclamation if he or she can occupy imaginatively the position of the exclamer. We might ask the agent why he or she thinks the object of attention worthy of exclamation. That could involve the agent confessing certain aspects of his or her character or basic concerns or ways of projecting the present into the future. Or we could imagine possible answers to these questions that open up possible our own possible affective relations to the scene—directed both to the observer and to the red that the speaker cares about.

My book will elaborate how Wittgenstein constructs the domain of expression out of what his commentators call avowals. Imagine the difference between what is called for as response to the statements “he is in pain” and “I am in pain.” The first is a description—it is true or false and invites further questions like “where specifically does it hurt.” The second is an expression. We might ask where does it hurt. But that will not satisfy a typical speaker of the sentence. The speaker elicits responses that are concerned with the pain and that inquire what the auditor might do in support or in sympathy. The expression invites attunement more than assessment of truth values.

I consider much of what has been called the humanities a concern for this expressive dimension in experience. At the most general level there are three basic features of expressive behavior that are incorporated within the humanities. First there is the expressive dimension of various kinds of public and private acts where we aim to acknowledge and value the human

concerns made visible rather than describe what is happening so that we can find explanations for it. Analogously there is often a significant expressive dimension in philosophy. Plato or Hegel foreground the qualities of concern and feeling that go into their specific narratives. Hegel even emphasizes the goal of his philosophy as less discovering truth per se than bringing peace to the restless mind. And there are obvious ways that historians can be concerned more with what actions and conditions express than with accurate description of various social forces.

The case of the historian brings out a second feature of the concept of expression not stressed by Wittgenstein but marvelously elaborated by Hegel. Expressive activity is always poised over a double genitive: the expression of a state can belong to the subject as a deliberate attribute or it can define the force of an object over the subject. John's expression of anger can manifest intricate control or it can betray him even as he loudly claims I am not angry. On a broader scale, an action like a war can be primarily an expression of the nation's patriotic spirit or the fact that it is duped by various economic interests or political chicanery. There is usually ample room for critiques of expressive activity that demonstrate what kind of forces they are expressions of that factor into the agent's manner of acting.

One can even appreciate the ways economic interests work on self-deception or how intricate are our powers of misrecognition. But when I use appreciation I will refer to a third domain of expression in which we not only attune ourselves to human activities but try to identify provisionally with them so that we can imagine what it would be like to be involved in the forces and pressures that the work embodies. I think for example of Richard Wollheim's great notion that works of visual art matter for us to the degree that we can see into them to flesh out how they provide gestures of care on several levels—in terms of the images themselves and in terms of the implicit acts by the artist in rendering those images with certain qualities that engage our sympathies and interpretive energies.^{viii}

In these cases identification need not be with the expressive author's inner life. To expand the field of possible identifications we need borrow one last figure from Wittgenstein. He distinguishes two modes of expression—an agent's activity of avowal and the agent's building a model by which an audience can come to recognize what an expression can involve. Wittgenstein adds the notion of making a model for expressions because something very close to avowal can occur simply in our need to make clear the angle from which we see details and project possible affective consequences:

If I know that the schematic cube has various aspects and I want to find out

what someone else sees, I can get him to make a model of what he sees in

addition to a copy, or to point to such a model; even though he has no idea of

my purpose in demanding two accounts.

But when we have a changing aspect the case is altered. Now the only

possible expression of our experience is what before perhaps seemed, or even

was a useless specification when once we had the copy. (PI, p. 196. Think of how we might make sense of the expression “Red!” by asking the agent for a model of what she sees. This model would not copy the impression of red but map a possibility for taking up that impression into an individual life history.

Talk of avowals matters because they afford good examples of how expressions call upon participation and attunement more than they do cognition. Given these calls,

I propose the figure of the appreciator as providing a worthy counterpart to the figure of the knower—the one quasi-superhero seeking to flesh out the power of particulars to engage attention, the other to account for what general factors allow the particular what significance it has. The figure of the appreciator develops how we might respond to the sense of particularity achieved by a particular state of expression in a given context. Or, to make the same point in another way, appreciation is the elaboration of how we learn to see into expressive behaviors rather than see through them.

Appreciation posits the goal of elaborating an individual’s capacities to fuse active intelligence with lively affective intensities. It stresses how attention to particulars elicits and even structures feelings; it attunes us to forces and constructive energies shaping complicated experiences; and it engages us in the kinds of moral energies that shape intense sympathies and aversions, while also setting those particular intensities against the possibility of any kind of moral generalization. And, even more important, appreciation invites second order reflections on the person one can become as we participate in such sympathies and such judgments. It dramatizes for us how much of our energies are repressed when we confine ourselves to practical judgments and when we ignore the challenge of having to align our wills with what we have come to know.

I can best make clear what appreciation involves by spelling out what I see as its four basic features. Obviously we have to specify what is involved in our sense of the particular object to which we respond. And we have to develop what occurs in us in that activity of responding. Then the final two features involve the implications of such action for discussing how develop more capacious grammars from acts of attunement and we extend the values involved in appreciation to the political realm.

We appreciate acts, objects, and states that we encounter within quotidian experience when we attune ourselves to what seem their distinctive purposive characteristics . (Purposiveness matters because that is what typically makes acts distinctive.) We appreciate objects when we see within them sources of fascination that engage affective aspects of invention and lead us to examine them carefully. When we turn to models that artists build for expressive purposes, we have somewhat different approaches to appreciation. For the fact that these objects are constructed brings several features to the fore.

The primary difference is that now the primary concern is neither with the subject nor the literal object. Appreciating texts requires foregrounding how they offer particular versions of experience in such a way that they elicit interest and fascination in that particularity. This particularity emerges in the arts on two interconnected levels. Reading involves recognizing how the work offers a purposive and self-reflexive bid to be fleshed out imaginatively as a specific action. And it entails attending to those qualities that emerge in our response for a sense of our own powers for participating as well as for caring about that participation. Through our attuning to the activity of the subject shaping the work we recognize its place within what we might call our grammar for engaging experience.

That grammar is self-reflexive: think of simultaneously trying to identify with Othello's passion and figuring out what powers one takes on by participating imaginatively in Othello's passion. We have to take in the degree to which the work is not only about expressive activity but takes on expressive force in itself as an embodiment of passion and of the effort to negotiate the implications of that passion. And we have to recognize how the constructive activity makes use of the history of techne in the relevant medium by virtue of the artistic decisions that foregrounded.^{ix} It matters how Shakespeare combines traditional allegorical representations of figures like Iago with a much more modern plumbing of indecipherable depths that emerge when we question his motives.

This manipulation of technique becomes a major factor in sharpening the sheer force of articulation by which the work bids to take on significance for its distinctive treatment of its materials. And that sense of individuality often emerges because as the inner relations grow more intricate it becomes impossible to relegate the work to any governing concept or type. We have to refer to that intricacy rather than our ideas about the subject in order to define how the object takes on expressive force. Often it feels that we do not appreciate the object on our terms but its terms: the art object can present a level of demand and challenge and mystery not typical in other domains of appreciation. So Attridge is right to emphasize the event qualities of these interacting modes of relation intensifying the imaginative concreteness of the work. But these very features force upon us, I think, not a language of truth and of morality but of power and demand and challenge and even fear that one is not quite adequate to what is being asked by that object.

A full demonstration of how textual objects produce this sense of power and challenge to the imagination is beyond the ken of this paper. And it is probably unnecessary since anyone reading this is likely to have had the relevant experience.

But I do want to indicate how efficiently and how thoroughly an ideal of appreciation can help celebrate significant dimensions of our reading experience by aligning them with the grammar by which we respond to expressive activity in general. So I will attend briefly to two short lyrics by Yeats—elaborating how language develops intensely concrete purposive relations that call upon and reward our resources for attunement.

The first poem, “A Drinking Song,” experiments with locating the expressiveness of poetry at a considerable distance from the speaking subject. In fact it is primarily the song form that speaks by creating a virtual space within the syntax that the reader must enter in order to complete the poem’s suggestiveness:

Wine comes in at the mouth
And love comes in at the eye;
That is all we shall know for truth
Before we grown old and die.
I lift the glass to my mouth,
I look at you, and I sigh. (CP 92)

I read the poem as inviting its readers to correlate three two-line syntactic units. The first consists of the work of the mouth and the eye. The second offers a somewhat pious and abstract version of the work of the mind attempting to articulate a generalized attitude toward what the body

experiences. The world of physical actions gets displaced into hypergeneralization. Then we return to the body. And syntax defines the powers in which we then participate. There is a one to one correlation between the abstract claim about the mouth and the speaker's responsive gesture. The second correlation takes only half a line because all one need to say to flesh out "love comes in at the eye is "I look at you." To say anything more would be to risk the displacing power of mind that we have already seen in the second unit.

Why is the physical correlate for the act of mind only "I sigh"? Here I think the economy of the poem gets complicated, and thrilling. In one sense the sigh continues the focus on looking at "you": this sigh suggests the immense gulf between the moment of loving and living with that love. But the major force of the sigh is generated by the contrast between it and the second two-line unit that it completes. What other bodily parallel might there be to the banal wisdom offered by the reflective mind? How can the poem internalize that action without submitting itself to another version of wisdom?. If what the mind says is true, the body can only sigh and act out its desire. Taken dramatically the sigh is a mark of pathos, a mode of surrender to fate slightly redeemed by the irony of knowing that more words would only create more pathos. But understood in relation to the tripartite structure of the poem, sighing becomes brilliantly active. This expressive act counters the mind's tendency toward sad generalization by making the sigh a willed form of expression: this lady is worth all the uncertainty that must follow letting oneself become a hostage to fortune. And style visibly takes on the power to make the responder recalibrate his or her interpretive stance—toward the lovers and perhaps toward the power of song itself to invoke its own traditional powers.

"The Magi" has a very different approach to expressive force, and to the syntactic features that model its contours:

Now as at all times I can see in the mind's eye
In their stiff, painted clothes, the pale unsatisfied ones
Appear and disappear in the blue depth of the sky
With all their ancient faces like rain beaten stones,
And all their helms of silver hovering side by side,
And all their eyes still fixed, hoping to find once more,
Being by Calvary's turbulence unsatisfied,
The uncontrollable mystery on the bestial floor. CP 124)

But again it is attention to the qualities of the act of mind that give the poem its particular intensities as event. The syntax here makes concrete a waiting that cannot long put off the inevitable encounter with terror. Because there

is a personalized speaker, the Magi can be taken out of historical context into another, more perplexing psychological and mythic state. Yet their force in this state depends on intricate links between sound and syntax. The first delay takes place because of a quiet clause that briefly interrupts the movement from subject to object in the opening sentence. The disruption in syntax is countered by the continuity of the long *a*'s that make dissatisfaction pervade the opening. Then there is the much greater series of delays that constitute the middle of the poem—as if the speaker were putting off the very confrontation that the figure of the magi made possible. Fascination shifts momentarily from what the mind's eye has to see to what mediates that seeing.

But these hesitations ultimately intensify the sense of horror in two basic ways. “Being by Calvary’s turbulence unsatisfied” presents an absolute clause that complicates the sense of delay. The previous three lines had observed the Magi from the outside; now the poem presents the basis of their values from the inside. And then we see clearly why the speaker makes the identification in the first place. No delay can put off for long this profound dissatisfaction with Cavalry. But these delays do considerably sharpen the force of “uncontrollable”—both in its semantic register as the opposite of an ultimately redemptive scene and in its sonic register setting up the liquid register of “bestial floor.” Ultimately this poem preserves as long as it can details that stress the humanity in both the speaker’s and the magi in order to intensify what is involved in the demand now to confront its absolute other. Syntax and sound manage to temper that otherness even as they threaten to assert their own independence as aspects of what is no longer controllable by humanity.

Both poems make distinctive contributions to our grammar for dealing with emotions—“Drinking Song” by invoking the logic of song and by complicating attitudes toward the pathos of desire, and “The Magi” by staging ambivalence about our desires to break through cultural frameworks to see vividly what they try to sublimate. So if we can free the reader from the obligation to treat the text as an example within some analysis of social forces or philosophical inquiry, we can begin to elaborate readerly rewards that extend beyond the sheer pleasure of admiring how the particular unfolds.

I propose to perform that act of liberation by invoking for literary study Richard Wollheim’s ideal of learning to see into paintings. “Seeing in” provides us the seeds for a practice of reading that relies on the language I have been employing of attunement, empathy and identification. Subjects

cultivate the values latent in these particulars by taking up imaginative stances characterized by what I call slow reflective judgment. Rather than attempt to dispose the particular by placing it within some specific categories allowing us to make use of it, we let our attention hover over what makes the object or text significant because of what happens as we attend to it.

Appreciation may involve a good deal of interpretive activity. But it pursues cognitive elements primarily because they serve two kinds of affective interests--in first order qualities of responsiveness and in second-order investments in who the person becomes by virtue of such responsiveness. Careful attention leads to questioning the object, and questioning leads to possible means of beginning to articulate its possible significance for us as an activity, or relation to our activity. Moreover such attention brings the will into play. Ultimately our aim is not only to understand how the particular offers a significant action but to affirm our pleasure because it stimulates our energies and promises connections with our structures of concern. We engage the object of attention in order to exercise our capacities to care about what we encounter, even if the satisfaction involves identifying with a power to unsettle and create discomfort.

This may be just to say that appreciation is intimately connected with taking on aesthetic attitudes. But we have to be clear that such attitudes need not be disinterested.^x Rather the attitudes afford specific opportunities to satisfy our imaginative interests in fleshing out the existential implications of what we read into the text. Such constructs train us in adapting the resources of consciousness and self-consciousness to versions of expressive states. Therefore they prove continuous with the full range of actions that can be valued in terms of what they express--from the sublime skills of athletic performance to what artists do to how we clumsily try to acknowledge acts of generosity, to refined versions of cruelty. The only qualification is that the focus on the practice abstracts from its practical goals to reflect on the qualities by which values and interests are pursued. Hegel can be seen as a great philosopher because of the depth of his analyses and the suggestiveness of his language. Even cultural criticism can be seen for its imaginative virtues, on those rare occasions when they prove striking.

If we concentrate on literary experience I can propose as our basic educational ideal conferring on students the capacity to clarify how texts make particular states of being available to audiences in ways that can engage the reader's full range of reflective and sympathetic energies. We

can contrast this model of participation to instrumental interpretations because with such modes of interpretation the relevant disciplinary practices offer no systematic help in learning to read for imaginative flexibility or openness to complexity or the refining of our capacities to register how style becomes capable of extending our affective investments in the work's relation to the world. Instrumental readings stressing seeing through texts risk missing everything that is involved in the difference between "Red." and "Red!" or in the contrast between generalization and "I sigh." That would involve a substantial cognitive loss, since we would not understand the impact of expressive acts on our capacities for response to human actions. And it would involve a substantial loss for our affective lives in relation to how we manage to care about both our own qualities of responsiveness and the kinds of states on which these are focused.

If we attend to texts only as instrumental means of producing knowledge we simply lose modes of valuing that emphasize how texts can satisfy interests distinctive to the experience of one's powers as a subject. This is why I want to place literary texts in a domain where it can be seen as an extension of practices that are fundamental and significant for our interests in the qualities of our lives. Literary works have the distinctive trait of inviting attention to two modes or levels of expression that our responses try to bring into conjunction—the modeling of a world we see through our participation in how the text stages expressive activity, and the shape of the modeling activity itself as a process of authorial decision-making that tries to afford an objective shape to how the expression can make a difference in its world.

It is probably past the time that I have to make clear how appreciation manages to mediate between attention to the particular and contextualizing those particulars in relation to our sense of how we best form minds and affective dispositions capable of enriching social interactions and formulating general attitudes toward values. As my third general category I want to speculate on how we adapt our sense of particulars to more capacious cultural frameworks and modes of interpreting experience. Put simply, habits of appreciation foster conditions where we make subtle transitions from seeing into particulars to adapting those particulars as means of seeing as and therefore as elements within more capacious cultural orientations. Seeing in produces possible dense examples that we can use for sorting our experiences in the present and in the future.^{xi} With art the relevant sense of example is not as an instance of a generalization. The work is not an

example of anything. Rather it becomes as an example as a particular demonstration of concerns and energies that gathers possible implications and applications and gives them an imaginative home—whether we find the text dramatizing possible applications or offering contrasts that sharpen other modes of engaging the world.

For example, the more richly we see into the character of Claudius, the more likely we are to compose a vision of sucking all the air out of what life might be for a stepson, and the more likely we are to be sympathetic with those who identify with that son's condition. Analogously, we can treat "the Magi" as affording examples that function on several levels, from the psychology by which we negotiate our own fascination with terror to social formations that refuse to be content with Enlightenment rationality. In both cases the examples function both by providing analogues for our own experiences and by providing figures of difference by which we specify what matters for us in those experiences.

Here I am less interested in the specific dynamics of how we use examples than in the purchase that model gives on how those concerned with expressive phenomena can pursue forms of social agreement about expressions that parallels the kind of agreement produced by epistemic disciplines. My claims have been based on the difference between description and expression, so I cannot make cognitive claims that one comes to "know" what expressions involve in ways that compel social agreement. So we have to talk about critical uses of exemplification making available what can be recognized as shareable powers to value those particulars. We can produce agreement on the process by which we elaborate why texts matter even if we continue to differ on what they are doing.

Clearly I need Kant's distinction between liking and approving to characterize the sociality of discussion about art. The effort to reach beyond immediate subjective pleasure towards the possibility that we can all see how the work might become exemplary depends on preserving interpersonal modes by which we sometimes exercise subjective judgments. But just as clearly one can no longer share Kantian talk of universals, even if only achieved symbolically. I have to rely on the possibility that we have tendencies to want to share acts of appreciation because we recognize that the appreciation can be deeper when it engages the ways other people see the object. Max Scheler pointed out that there are two fundamental models of value. One model takes the form of zero sum games where for one to gain something the other must lose. If I want more cake someone must get

less. The other model offers just the opposite case: when I attend a symphony my sense of value is enhanced by the efforts of the audience to take as much pleasure for themselves as possible. (I offered this model to a class in the 1970's where one scruffy student exclaimed, "When I am stoned that cake is a symphony.")

Insofar as appreciation fits the second model we can see how acts of appreciation build up public languages about the capacities of expressive activity to sponsor shareable modes of responsiveness. These need not involve agreement. It suffices that they involve the desire to include other responses in one's own considerations. Or the appreciation can be adapted so that it places itself in dialogue with those of others. We produce social groups in part identified by how they see the text connecting to the world, and affording imaginative possibilities within it. And we have the basis for explaining why differences in interpretation can be celebrated as signs of a text's continuing relevance for a society.

Finally I want to develop the significance of the fact that many of our culture's most highly valued literary texts make a major issue of exemplifying the cultural implications of the possibilities for appreciation that the text affords. Probably the most intimate examples of the connection occur in Shakespeare's epilogues, where the actor asks the audience to speculate on how their applause for the play might have implications for their beliefs and behaviors. And the entire last act of *A Winter's Tale* consists in a movement from narrating the consequences of the daughter's return to the simple wordless witnessing of the miracle that allows Leontes to return to married life. The *Odyssey* offers exemplary moments where Odysseus' marvels at what civilized life can offer, and the *Divine Comedy* concentrates ultimately on appreciating how God's justice and God's love can be one. I do not intend to browbeat my readers into an ideology of appreciation: they would not appreciate that. But I want to indicate the possibility that serious reflection on what is asked of audiences can get internalized thematically as the writer's awareness of how imaginative activity can be woven into the work of civilization.

These texts suggest that appreciation has civilizing force, and hence for me political force because it tries to resist the destructive dynamics of resentment.^{xii} Therefore I will argue that the cultivating of these aesthetic dispositions is a significant form of social action, and probably the best literary experience can do in offering a politics compatible with focusing on the particularity of texts. Appreciation will usually not have force sufficient to overrule the empirical ego's practical judgments or to combat successfully

the way the academy has made this empirical ego virtually the absolute arbiter of values. Nor will appreciation have sufficient force to weigh heavily in many judgments about the choices available to us as social agents. Nonetheless there are times when appreciation can provide awareness of more capacious possible grounds of judgment, if only in the vocabulary for human relations that they deploy. And those opportunities may enter into an ideal calculus for judging what we might do in particular circumstances.

The relevance of such observations for political life is not glamorous. These observations do not promise revolution or even modifications in social justice. But reading attentively, and affirming the states that result, may produce social good beyond the pleasures such states afford, because readers find themselves potential participants in the struggle between appreciation and resentment. Just think about how often people seem consumed by resentment about race, class, gender, and virtually any privilege given to one group and not to another. It often seems as if resentment were our form of social glue, since there we find a strange source of equality and a common vocabulary. But, as Nietzsche showed, this social glue locks individuals into fierce efforts to defend imaginary versions of themselves. Resentment at being denied what we think we are worth only generates oppositional structures between what we resist as oppression and we often glory in as justifiable domination. When agents enter this condition, they narrow their sense of self-worth to self-defensive abstract identifications much too inflexible to match actual opportunities for exploring new aspects of our experiences.

Appreciation alone cannot provide concepts that might bring this needed flexibility. More important, the proponent of appreciation has to recognize that resentment is sometimes necessary and productive because it marshals forces against injustice—nowhere more pointedly than in relation to the privileges held by the one percent in American society. But habits of reading for appreciation can help us recognize what is representative in dangerous modes of self-protection for which I find Leontes in *A Winter's Tale* exemplary. And these habits are not quietist. They offer constant exercises in deploying the will as we try to adapt the attitudes that inform gratitude and respect. These habits introduce us to worlds where we find interests in mobilizing the imagination's capacities for sympathy or cooperation rather than having to negotiate conflicts over entitlements.

On another level, acts of appreciation dramatize self-reflexive paths where we are encouraged to dwell on what we honor rather than suspect or fear. Attention to these paths implicates us in a quotidian politics with no imposing drama and little opportunity for righteousness (unless one writes

literary theory). But I suspect that any significant politics is a quotidian politics—either fighting for specific agendas or living out specific commitments to forms of self-regard that have a strong interest in the processes by which one can recognize other people’s humanity. I fear that no less a change of disposition is required if we are to produce alternatives to all the incitements to resentment in how Western societies handle race, gender, and economic distinctions. If we can keep our attention on what gives us the kinds of pleasures that an interest in sheer meaningfulness can afford, we might be able to make at least small turns to possible states of mind grounded in gratitude rather than resentment. There will still be enough resentment left over to fuel large-scale political commitments and struggles over the vacuous heritage of talk about the humanities.

i “Why Appreciation Ought to be Revived as a Model for the Study of the Arts.”
Frame
(2007): 63-80.

ii Pater’s basic work in this vein is his collection of essays *Appreciations*

iii Derek Attridge *The Singularity of Literature* . I feel much more attachment to Rita Felski’s , but she

iv First I think Attridge’s terms like “singularity” and “other” confuse quantity and quality and are practically unusable. As Attridge notices, but is not bothered by, singularity must become typical on some level and the other must gravitate toward the same. How can we tell when and where to preserve otherness and when to seek sameness. Attridge seems to think such decisions happens in reading, or, better, in performing the text. I think such terms just add metaphysical elements that make it impossible to settle on existential states without worrying that we are failing some ideal condition of inventiveness. Yet writers typically want to construct a model or attitude; they do not aim to construct a singularity or an other. Similarly his model is based on creativity and the obligations it imposes on an audience. My model is based on how readers can place texts in the world and adapt languages directly significant in that world. Finally, Attridge on the other has to envision an epistemic state—responding to a text—producing obligations that involve affective states and active dispositions. But there is nothing is the simple existence of the other as text that can obligate us to an ethical language driven by an other as personal presence. Recognizing the singularity of a person could be a reason for fear or violence rather than letting it be. Appreciation on the other hand is from the start a condition of pleasure and a disposition of will. I think pleasure involves interests, not obligations, and therefore one can make predications about reading that do not involve obligations driven by fictions of authors and analogues for authored things.

Also Attridge’s idio-culture stresses the differences that make up an individual’s world. Yet those differences for me are eclipsed by the language games that make that world articulate and allow exchanges within it. and those are spaces held in common, so that fosters the ability to move around in them seems to be more valuable than the ability to locate one’s own differences and even enjoy them.

v It seems clear that one comes away from reading significant literature with fresh and new senses of what might count as knowledge. But it also seems clear that when we try to define that knowledge we end up subsuming possibilities into existential properties and flirting with versions of truth that in the next breath we need to call aesthetics to the rescue. So will avoid cognitive claims—not because literature is not informative on many levels but because we simply do not have effective ways of correlating such claims with the domain of possibility that for me seems basic to literary experience. This may not be satisfying but it should help us avoid the more unsatisfying consequences of the bad faith I think inherent in our prevailing disciplinary models.

vi John Guillory in chapter five of his *Cultural Capital* makes a strong case for the role of taste in Enlightenment social theory and the loss of that when aesthetics turns to the qualities of objects.

vii I try versions of this argument for a new and altered emphasis on rhetoric in literary studies in two essays: NLH and Chicago Review

viii Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*

ix artists and writers can offer versions of expression without any reference to Romantic inwardness—think of Malevich earning the exclamation mark after “red” by how he positions a red square in relation to a larger black one, or Van Gogh earning it by how his image of compressed bedroom plays its red against a sickly green.

x Kant’s focus on pleasure rather than on other terms for engaging the object traps him into equating interest with the existence of the object rather than his only alternative, pleasure in the work.

And my proposal emphasizes the continuities of literary experience with other kinds of experience—the opposite path from Attridge because he wants a poetics and ethics of the other, which becomes a metaphysical term even though he fights it. [It is also the opposite path from Adorno who illustrates the problem of trying to define art so as to preserve both autonomy and truth without separating spheres of activity (or language games) and the practices they involve.]

^{xi} I have too many times drawn out the impact of this model of sorting by repeating Nelson Goodman's arguments. Now I will just allude to what I consider is my clearest statement—witt and example essay

^{xii} See History of Resentment by Frero I think

Works Cited

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